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SUBJECT: ETHIOPIA: ASSISTANT SECRETARY FRAZER AND PRIME  
MINISTER MELES DISCUSS OGADEN, SOMALIA, NORWAY AND ERITREA

Classified By: AMBASSADOR DONALD YAMAMOTO.  
REASON 1.4 (b) and (d).

11. (S/NF) SUMMARY: Assistant Secretary Frazer, accompanied by NSC Senior Advisor Pittman raised the Ogaden and her visit to Gode in the heart of the Ogaden region, noting the insurgency problem, food insecurity and the need for reestablishing market mechanisms to help alleviate problems in the region. The Prime Minister noted the insurgency problem in the Ogaden and his efforts and continued commitment to relief efforts. He noted the need for the international community to support institution building and training of TFG troops as two essential elements to ensure the survival of the TFG and to avoid a resurgence of the extremist Islamic Courts. Meles also noted that a middle way between recognition and no relations must be found to deal with Somaliland. Finally, the Prime Minister defended the downsizing of the Norwegian Mission as a warning to stop its unhelpful role supporting Eritrean destabilizing policies and other political activities on behalf of insurgent groups.  
END SUMMARY.

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THE OGADEN REGION  
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12. (S/NF) Assistant Secretary Jendayi Frazer, accompanied by NSC Senior Africa Advisor Bobby Pittman and Ambassador (notetaker) met Prime Minister Meles, September 8. The Assistant Secretary expressed her appreciation to the Prime Minister for the release of 71 detainees arrested in the wake of the 2005 national election, calling the release helpful for Ethiopia's internal political dialogue and addressing concerns in the U.S. She also thanked the Prime Minister for facilitating her travel to Gode, in the heart of the Ogaden region the previous day, noting that the trip allowed her to address concerns back in Washington on the situation in the Ogaden based on her meetings with local officials, clan elders, NGO groups and a visit to a feeding center. She noted that opening commercial traffic, which supplies over 80 percent of the food needs for the people in the Ogaden, is key to addressing the food needs as well as supporting market mechanisms which will help alleviate food insecurity in the region. The Prime Minister discussed the insurgency problem in the Ogaden and noted his government's efforts to address the humanitarian needs of the population in the Somali region of Ethiopia, and agreed that climatic problems of both

semi-desert conditions and flooding in some parts of the Ogaden add to food insecurity.

13. (S/NF) In an earlier meeting with the Prime Minister's national security advisor, Abey Tsehaye, the Assistant Secretary delved into the detail of her trip to the Ogaden

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and the necessity to open commercial traffic, as well as to ensure that military escorts for food deliveries not delay distribution. Tsehaye, one of the Prime Minister's close advisors and the key minister working on the Ogaden, noted that Ethiopia was focused on, and will continue to focus on, opening more corridors for humanitarian food deliveries and commercial food trade. He and the Prime Minister noted the problem of landmines and insurgent activities as a barrier in providing safe passage for food deliveries, and underscored that Ethiopia will continue to resolve the security problem and continue its commitment to push forward on relief efforts.

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SOMALIA: TWO ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS FOR SUCCESS  
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14. (S/NF) Prime Minister Meles said AMISOM troops are critical for Somalia not because they are a peacekeeping force, and not because of their size, but because they are a symbol of AU commitment to Somalia. AMISOM represents an official recognition of the Transitional Federal Government as the legitimate sovereign entity for Somalia. The challenge is to expand the number of troops contributing countries to AMISOM and to find funding to sustain operations. AMISOM will not have the necessary troops strength to stabilize Somalia and so ultimately only the Somalis themselves can bring peace to Somalia. Towards this

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end, the Prime Minister said he saw two essential elements necessary for success. First, the TFG must expand political reconciliation, seeking out former Islamic Court officials and clan elders. Second, the international community could help stabilize Somalia and support the TFG by institution building and training of TFG forces.

15. (S/NF) The Prime Minister viewed the reconciliation congress as going half way in engaging the clans and bringing them into the process. Prime Minister expressed his appreciation to the Saudis for funding the congress, noting that it was important for an Arab country to support efforts in Somalia. The actions of Qatar providing assistance to Eritrea, which seeks to undermine efforts in Somalia, for instance, were unhelpful. The TFG needs to do more to engage individuals who could help bring clans into the process. For instance, former Islamic Court officials, some of whom see protection of their private property as key to the reconciliation process. Somalis are the most practical people in the continent and private property and land ownership are foremost on their minds over ideology.

16. (S/NF) The second essential element is revamping the TFG to ensure that it acts like a responsible government accountable for its actions. Lack of salary payments has forced clans to revert to setting up roadblocks to collect taxes, thus making the TFG more of a warlord government. Unfortunately, many of the actions taken by the TFG are short term focused on immediate gains rather than a long term approach to build institutions and stability in the country.

The Prime Minister said the international community has ignored the important objective of building institutions, key to stability. The European Union has not been helpful and has been resistant to helping the process. The Prime Minister expressed his deep appreciation to the U.S. for its support, but more needs to be done, particularly financial support from the international community. Training of TFG troops are also essential to allow the TFG to guarantee security of the country on its own. Meles commented that

insurgents still operate in the lower Juba area as well as in Mogadishu and other areas. The TFG cannot neutralize insurgents in the south, but can contain the region until that time they are strong enough to counter the insurgents.

¶7. (S/NF) Meles said Ethiopian troops cannot stay in Somalia because it is counter productive. But the GOE must find a balance between withdrawal of its troops and ensuring that the TFG is strong enough to stabilize the country and survive. But the criticism from the EU and the cost of sustaining the deployment may force Ethiopia to withdraw sooner than is appropriate and Meles has already advised President Yusuf to make every effort to speed up institution building and training of TFG troops.

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RESURGENCE OF THE ISLAMIC COURTS - NOT EXACTLY  
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¶8. (S/NF) The Assistant Secretary referred to her meeting with AU Chairman Konare who told her that the 2009 elections could bring back the Islamic Courts because these extremists are more popular than any other group. Meles countered by saying that while there is a small hardcore group of ideologues, Somalis are practical and that clan ties are more important. The problem is not that Jihadists would win. Rather, the government elected will be so fractured that the progress being made now will be undercut. A jihadist group could not control all of Somalia, but it could undermine stability. Finding a model to help stabilize Somalia is difficult. Afghanistan comes closest but Somalia's clan structure makes it unique and a difficult challenge.

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SOMALILAND - SEMI-RECOGNITION  
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¶9. (S/NF) Meles noted that he had cautioned TFG President Yusuf to focus strictly on Somalia and not to be sidetracked by taking on other issues, such as Somaliland or to support Puntland which would enhance fissures between Somaliland and

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Puntland. Meles believed that treating Somaliland like Moldova or Taiwan, providing it a status between full recognition and no recognition is a good interim solution for dealing with Somalia. "Semi-recognition" would allow the international community to engage with Somaliland on trade and assistance, while keeping relations between Somaliland and the fledgling Somali state in balance.

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DEALING WITH ERITREA  
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¶10. (S/NF) Prime Minister Meles briefly touched on Eritrea's destabilizing activities calling it a part of the terrorism problem in the region. President Isaias uses terrorist activities to blackmail countries to get attention and to get support or recognition of its position on issues. Isaias is not being held accountable, according to Meles. Discussion of placing Eritrea on the list of countries sponsoring terrorism has sparked reaction from Eritrea, but also raised attention to its activities. Meles agreed with the Assistant Secretary to share fully information Ethiopia has on Eritrean activities as well as on materials, such as weapons, captured, which could be traced through the serial numbers on the weapons.

¶11. (S/NF) The Assistant Secretary raised Norway as seeking to play a helpful role in the Somali contact group and did not seek to undermine the venue for the EEBC discussions. Meles said it was an accumulation of activities which forced it to reduce Norway's diplomatic presence in Ethiopia, not

sever relations, as a warning to Norway to cease its unhelpful activities. Meles noted that Norwegian groups were providing indirect support for Eritrean funds to Sudan and other areas which have proven unhelpful to peace and stability; the Norwegian government has been involved with the OLF beyond its coordination with the Ethiopian government, as well as with other insurgent groups; and support for Eritrean policy positions.

¶12. (S/NF) COMMENT: Prime Minister Meles was much more at ease than we have seen of him in previous meetings. He expressed confidence that the Ogaden insurgency problem is being handled and his commitment to support relief efforts to the region is helpful to our efforts to explain to Washington the Ogaden problem and the solutions necessary to meet these challenges. Somalia continues to trouble the Meles government and the financial drain is forcing Ethiopia to consider an exit strategy earlier than desired by the African Union and the Ethiopians themselves. END COMMENT.  
YAMAMOTO